

# 184<sup>th</sup> COMMUNICATIONS FLIGHT



## LINEAGE

184th Communications Flight, 6 Jun 1966  
Inactivated, 12 Feb 1982  
184th Communications Flight, 16 Mar 1994

## STATIONS

McConnell AFB, KS

## ASSIGNMENTS

## COMMANDERS

Maj Owen Bridgewater, 6 Jun 1966  
Cpt Michael H. Lewark, 16 Aug 1972  
Maj Donald L. Steanson, 21 Dec 1976  
Maj Don S. Jackson, 1 May 1988  
Cpt Bruce J. Stewart, 11 Jul 1992  
2LT Lt James A. Price, 21 Mar 1996  
Maj David A. Weishaar, 10 Jan 2005

## HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**

**MOTTO**

**NICKNAME**

## OPERATIONS

The Flight provides technologically advanced, state-of-the-art communications support services to the most diversified IT mission wing in the Air National Guard, and critical DSCA support to the state of Kansas for emergency disaster responses. Communications airmen are

trained to provide support for voice, data and video transport (wired & wireless) systems, real time /near real time radar and satellite imagery, and all internal and external connectivity required for real world operations. Also monitors and supports Information Assurance security programs, communications equipment tracking, circuit requisitions/installations and Information Knowledge operations for sustaining web-based requirements and postal functions. All efforts are focused to provide the best possible communications services to the modern warfighter and state communities.

184th Communications Flight (Support), Kansas Air National Guard, had its origins in the 184th Combat Support Squadron. Federal Recognition was granted to the 184th CFS on 6 June 1966, per NG-AFOTM, National Guard Bureau, dated 1 June 1966. The unit became a separate distinct entity under the command of Major Owen Bridgewater. The Air Force Communications Service (AFCS) was designated as the major gaining command and Tactical Communications Area was designated as the mobilization gaining command.

The unit began operations at McConnell AFB, Kansas with an authorized strength of 2 officers and 27 enlisted personnel. The initial complement of personnel and equipment were reassigned from the 184th Combat Support Squadron, and attained full strength shortly thereafter.

Although the scope and depth of operations increased dramatically in recent years since the advent of the Total Force Concept, the basic mission of the 184th CFS is relatively the same today as it was in 1966. The mission of the unit is to provide a group of highly trained and skilled communicators and electronic technicians to perform Communications-Electronics staff, operations, and maintenance functions in support of the 184th Tactical Fighter Group, the Military Department of the State of Kansas, the Air Force Communications Command, and the US Air Force.

The following units of the Kansas Air National Guard were ordered to Active Duty effective 26 January 1968, for a period not to exceed 24 months: 184<sup>th</sup> Communications Flight

In 1971 and 1972 several changes occurred which had a significant impact on the 184CFS. In 1971 the parent flying unit converted from F-100s to the F-105, and was redesignated as the 184th Tactical Fighter Training Group with a student pilot training mission. The resulting expansion of the 184th TFTG necessitated a significant increase in CEM support from the 184th CFS. In the next two years the number of systems/equipment increased almost threefold. In the following year the mobilization gaining command for the unit was changed from Tac Comm Area to North Comm Area and several new AFSC programs were initiated to improve the Gaining Command support to the Comm Flt's. Then in August 1972, Major Owen Bridgewater, Commander of the Comm Flt, retired and command of the unit was assumed by Captain Michael H. Lewark on 16 August 1972.

Under the command of Captain Lewark the unit actively pursued major improvements in its overall operational capabilities. The effectiveness of these endeavors was reflected in the results of the Annual Management Effectiveness Inspection conducted by the AFCS Inspector General in November 1974. The 184 CFS was rated excellent overall and numerous unit personnel were cited for their outstanding work and performance.

In 1975 the unit received new assets and responsibilities when the USAF transferred two Runway Supervisory Units (mobile control towers) to the 184th CFS to support the pilot training mission of the 184 TFTG. The 184 TFTG also received control of Smoky Hill Weapons Range at Salina, Kansas. In August 1976, Captain Lewark was transferred to the US Air Force Reserve and Lt Col Merlin S. Keely assumed temporary command of the 184th CFS and designated First Lieutenant Joseph C. Dietz to act as OIC, pending assignment of a new commander. Captain Donald L. Steanson assumed command of the unit on 21 December 1976.

An intensive program to upgrade all CEM facilities/equipment at McConnell AFB and Smoky Hill Weapons Range was launched by the 184 CFS in late 1976. This modernization program continued until 1980. During this period every major CEM item in use was replaced with the latest state-of-the-art equipment available. The result of this program was a significant improvement in the command and control capabilities of the 184 TFG and an improvement in the training capabilities of the 184th CFS.

In August 1978, an oxidizer leak developed at a Titan II missile complex near Rock, Kansas. This highly corrosive and lethal substance necessitated the abandonment of the 381st SMW complex 533-7 and the total loss of communications with emergency personnel in the area. The 184th CFS responded by establishing an HF radio link between the on-site command post and McConnell AFB. This link was maintained for the first 8 days after the incident, and the first 72 hours.

On 12 February 1982, Special Order G-3 (Air), Office of the Adjutant General, Topeka, Kansas, directed "Inactivation of the 184<sup>th</sup> CFS, 12 February 1982." and returned control to the National Guard Bureau. Major Donald L. Steanson, Commander, and his 24 enlisted personnel were transferred to the 184th Combat Support Squadron.

The 184<sup>th</sup> Communications Flight was activated again.

The Communications Flight consisted of four separate branches. The Information Systems Branch was responsible for the Network Control Center, Information Assurance, Forms and Publications, Mail Room, and Records Management. The Mission Systems Branch was responsible for performing all the maintenance functions, such as, Computer Maintenance, Radio Maintenance, and Telephone Maintenance. The Plans Branch was critical to improving the communication infrastructure of the entire wing, and was responsible for planning and implementing all information technology and equipment requirements, long haul circuit actions, and telephone billing. The Multimedia Support Branch was the smallest and most visible branch in the Flight. They were responsible for photography, video, graphics and maintaining the Closed Circuit Television System (CCTV). Several members of the Communications Flight (CF) were also on the Military Support to Civil Authority Team. This team was tasked to provide emergency communication capability during a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Some of the significant events in the communications field date back to August 1986 when the 184th stood up their first telephone system with their own DSN and Commercial access lines. In July 1987, CCTV was installed throughout the unit and ancillary training could now be

accomplished by TV. A major milestone in communications happened on 16 November 1989 when the communications personnel and the Air National Guard contractor I-Net Inc completed installation of two interconnected Local Area Networks (LANs) making the 184th the second unit in the ANG to install a LAN. Initial connections allowed 54 computers to connect to the Learning Center LAN and another 54 connections to the Group-Wide LAN. Nearly 100 unit members were introduced and trained on how to use the new network, electronic mail and the Enable Office Assistant program. The "Information Age" continued to boom and Information Technology (IT) changed so fast it was difficult to keep up. Proven technologies were making their way to the desktops and work areas of ANG personnel.

In April 1998, the Wing's network migrated from a Banyan Vines Network to the new Window NT Network creating major changes in standard word processing, messaging, and email.

In May 1998, the Wing hosted the Adjutant General Association of the United States Spring Conference at the Wichita Marriott Hotel. The CF created a "command center" for all computer, phone, and visual equipment required for mass numbers of general officers. They provided nine DSN lines, STU-III access, multiple fax lines and a network of 26 personal computers with Internet access, along with an impressive array of visual equipment in the conference rooms.

In November 1999, the CF deployed to Hickam AFB, Hawaii. They assisted the 154 CF by installing and relocating phones, LAN wiring, and cable management systems. They also turned in excess systems, created a file plan system, brought their WEB site into compliance, and assisted in network migration to Windows NT.

In April 2001, the CF deployed thirty-five members to the 156th Air Wing, Muniz ANG Base, Puerto Rico to upgrade their installation wiring. They installed communications racks, ran LAN lines, terminated and tested each connection, and spliced fiber optic cable. At the end of the two weeks, 8.4 miles of wiring had been replaced in six buildings with 976 terminations tested. They also installed copper and fiber optic cable in additional facilities.

In 2001, the notification of another conversion tasked the 184 CF to overhaul the entire Wing's IT infrastructure. Much work went into system design and installation drastically increasing communications capabilities and reliability for mission critical operations. These efforts directly contributed to the successful conversion of the Wing including the stand-up of the ANG Network Operations Security Center, the Intelligence Squadron, and the Information Warfare Aggressor Squadron.

Upgraded the Wing CCTV system to receive the new digital broadcasts being mandated by the federal government.

One of the first Air National Guard wings to install the Host Based Security System.

Managed more than 5,000 information technology assets worth an estimated \$7.7 million.

Migrated the Wing data circuit to the Network Operations Security Squadron.

2010

Completed a \$12 million Combat Information Transport System Infrastructure project that merged the 184th IW and 22nd Air Refueling Wing data networks into a single McConnell Air Force Base data network. Planned, coordinated and installed a new core services delivery system for the data network at Smoky Hill Weapons Range. Installed and modified the communications infrastructure in nine buildings to support sustainment, restoration and modernization as well as other military construction projects.

Engineered and relocated the Smoky Hill Weapons Range commercial communications presence and associated military circuits to ensure a more robust network infrastructure for the 284th Air Support Operations Squadron and range

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Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.